

109th Congress  
Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives

March 15, 2006

The Honorable Michael Johanns  
Secretary  
United States Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20250-0001

Dear Secretary Johanns:

Thank you for last year's purchase of a significant volume of asparagus products. The domestic asparagus industry has greatly benefited from the surplus removal purchases in recent years. The purchases have helped alleviate pressure that has resulted from increasing imports. However, the challenges in the industry from Peru continue to dramatically impact the industry. Therefore, we are writing to request an immediate commodity purchase of asparagus products to assist the damaged industry.

The U.S. asparagus industry continues to face severe challenges. In the past two years, both Del Monte and Seneca foods have closed their processing facilities and moved all production to Peru. These two companies were responsible for processing 35 million pounds of asparagus, or more than half of all asparagus processed in the U.S.

Peru has developed a successful asparagus industry in the last decade largely from the duty-free treatment it gained under the Andean Trade Preferences Act. ATPA was enacted in 1991 to assist with drug suppression efforts in the Andean region. In reviewing the Act, the Government Accountability Office has on several occasions reported that asparagus production in the United States has been displaced by duty-free imports from Peru and will continue to experience displacement.

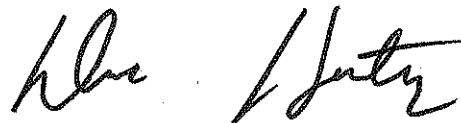
The asparagus industry is diligently working to expand fresh market opportunities and to develop new consumer-friendly processed products. In addition, Michigan, Washington and California have created a new alliance titled the National Asparagus Council to work more closely in solving the problems faced by the asparagus industry. However, the industry still contains excess productive capacity due to increased quantities of imports. As the industry works to transition, a need for the Department of Agriculture to purchase asparagus products continues to exist. *For this reason we are requesting that the Department of Agriculture make a bonus commodity purchase of asparagus products - including 2 million pounds of canned cut and tips and 2 million pounds of frozen cut and tips.*

We look forward to working with you to ensure that the department's commodity purchases serve the needs of our nutritional programs, as well as assist America's farmers by reducing excess supplies. Your willingness to purchase domestic asparagus at this critical time would be greatly appreciated.

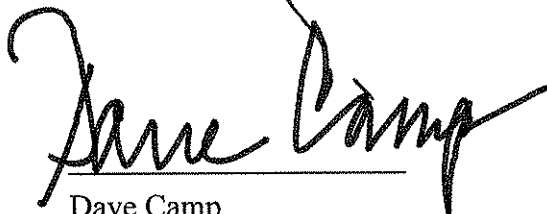
Sincerely,



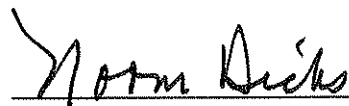
Pete Hoekstra  
Member of Congress



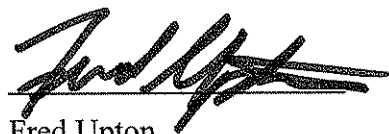
Doc Hastings  
Member of Congress



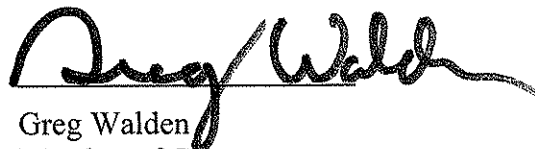
Dave Camp  
Member of Congress



Norman Dicks  
Member of Congress



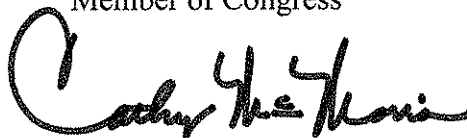
Fred Upton  
Member of Congress



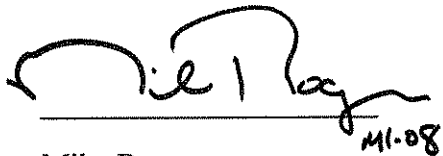
Greg Walden  
Member of Congress



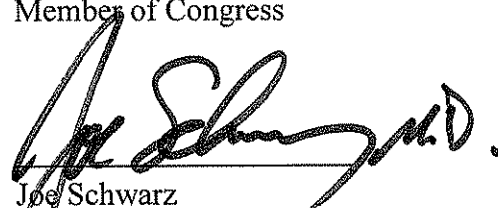
Vernon J. Ehlers  
Member of Congress



Cathy McMorris  
Member of Congress



Mike Rogers  
Member of Congress



Joe Schwarz  
Member of Congress



Candice Miller  
Member of Congress